

"Mein Weg heisst mich nur vorwärts eilen."

TANNHÄUSER, act. i.

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The Tannhäuser Drama.

PART I.

"Nun will ich aber heben an
von dem Danhauser singen
und was er Wunders hat getan
mit Venus, der edlen Minne."



HLAND has handed down to us the old folk-song of which the above is the opening verse, and which appears to have been first printed in the year 1515. For this and the following particulars as to the historical origin of the "Tannhäuser"-saga we are indebted to an extremely valuable article in the "*Bayreuther Taschen-Kalender*" for 1891, contributed by Dr. Wolfgang Golther, a member of the *Allgemeine*

Richard Wagner Verein who has done most useful work in the critical examination of several of the Master's dramas.

Dr. Golther tells us, in the article referred to, that the popular poem thus at last crystallised in its present form, dates from a much earlier period, in fact from the end of the thirteenth century. Like most of the people's myths, it was built up around an actual historical personage; in this case a certain minstrel, *Tannhûsaere* who was undoubtedly the author of a number of ballads still extant. To quote our authority: "He wrote his poems between the years 1240 and 1270. His patron was Frederick the Quarrelsome, of Austria (+1246). During the lifetime of the latter, Tanhûser had all that man could wish for; he was enfeoffed of an estate near Vienna. But after Frederick's death, his happiness took wings. Fair women, good wine and luxurious living helped to dissipate his property, which he mortgaged; and he thenceforth lived from hand to mouth. He sings how Herr Lavish, Herr Do-nothing, and Herr Seldom-rich were the architects of his house, and how Herr Want, Herr Despair, Herr Loss, and Herr Unready, were its constant inmates. In Otto II. of Bavaria, the State-holder of Austria from 1246 till his death in 1253, he found a second protector, and sung the praises of his son-in-law King Conrad IV. (+1254). He thus stood among the ranks of the Hohenstaufen party, and was an opponent of the Pope. For a long time he led a wayfaring life, and wandered far upon the face of the earth. He suffered the hardships of the sea, and took part in one of the Crusades, probably that of 1228. In a manuscript collection of ballads (the so-called Manessian, formerly at Paris and now restored to Heidelberg) he is drawn in the mantle of the cross."

In the closing verse of the poem above cited there is given the name of the Pope who condemned Tanhûser to eternal perdition, and from this circumstance Dr. Golther, with every appearance of justice, draws the following conclusions: "The Pope of the Tannhâuser-saga is Urban IV. (1261-64), and thus a contemporary of Tanhûser. This circumstance is of itself conclusive that the Saga dates from the second half of the thirteenth century. The Middle

Ages were extremely uncritical as regards matters of history, and very quickly forgot its facts. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would thus have hardly been aware that Tannhäuser and Urban IV. were contemporaries. If we further consider that Tannhäuser belonged to the Hohenstaufen party and that the Tannhäuser-poem betrays an anti-papal tendency, the time of origin of the Saga may most reasonably be fixed as shortly after Tannhäuser's death (ca. 1270). Mayhap it was his own songs that gave it the first impulse; their headstrong mockery, the blunt physicalism of their joy in life, and therewith the 'Song of Penance,' might easily have given rise to a fabulous story about the man who had drunk the cup of life to its dregs, and then had sought in penance salvation for his soul."

That the legend soon became widely popular is sufficiently proved by the numerous editions of the brief poem (for it contains only 26 verses) which appeared from 1515 onwards; by the fact that Hans Sachs in 1517 made it the subject of a shrove-tide play; that it was transposed into several other Germanic tongues, and even found a place in French literature. Of the latter we have accessible evidence in the quotation from the "*Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour*," by *Maistre Antoine Galet* (1530), with which our own poet Swinburne has prefaced his glowing "Laus Veneris."

But the legend of Tannhäuser is not the only one upon which Richard Wagner has drawn for the main plot of his drama. He has woven another series of incidents so inextricably with the history of his hero, that it might at first seem incredible that the two threads were originally derived from separate looms. However, Dr. Golther informs us, in the article already cited, that the "Singing-tourney" formed no part of the earlier Tannhäuser-legend, as indeed an examination of the popular ballad will show. This tournament of song had for its principal figure a supposititious personage, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* by name. Our authority tells us that no trace of the existence of such a poet can anywhere be found, and that he was purely the creation of some wandering minstrel of Thuringia, to whom we have to thank not only the poem

of this "Singing-tourney" but in all probability that of "Lohengrin." To use Dr. Golther's words: "In the year 1206, according to the Saga, the most celebrated poets of the day assembled at the court of Hermann, Landgrave of Thuringia, for a tournament of song. An illumination in the Manessian manuscript gives the picture of the scene as follows: above sit the Landgrave Hermann, sword in hand, and his spouse Sophia; below we see the rival singers: Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walther von der Vogelweide, Reimar the old, Heinrich the scribe, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, and Klugesor of Hungary. Biterolf also belongs to the posse of poets. The singers partly pose dark riddles to one another, partly dispute on hidden secrets of theology, such as the birth of Lucifer etc. All unite in praise of the Landgrave Hermann, but Heinrich von Ofterdingen extols Leopold of Austria still higher. The strife is conducted with terrible earnestness, for the vanquished becomes the headsman's prey. Heinrich was welnigh lost, when he fled for help to the Landgravine, who spread her shielding mantle over him. He was then allowed to send for succour. He brought Klugesor, the magician, as his ally, and engaged once more in the combat. Naturally the 'black art' is vanquished, and Wolfram is proclaimed victor over the powers of hell. Thus narrates a poem of the end of the thirteenth century, a poem that still demands a considerable amount of elucidation. The learned were long in doubt as to whether this singing-tourney was a historical fact; but that is certainly not the case; there never took place a tournament of song such as here described, and the poets above named were never assembled at one time at the Landgrave's court. The Saga is the sheer invention of some minstrel; a conclusion evident enough from the opposition of Wolfram by Klugesor, a figure taken from his own epic, *Parzival*. The only pretext for the composition lay in the fact that Hermann's court was at the beginning of the 13th century a refuge, at one time or another, for almost all the greater poets of the day."

At the risk of wearying our readers, we must pursue this portion of our subject a little farther; and here we come to the

testimony of the poet-composer himself. He tells us in his "*Mittheilung an meine Freunde*." (1851) that in early youth he had made the acquaintance of the Tannhäuser-legend in the "half mystic, half coquettish" romance of Tieck; whilst he had learnt something of the Singing-tourney from E. A. Hoffmann's "*Serapionsbrüdern*." But both had left him unmoved, until soon after completing the *Flying Dutchman* (1841) he came across a German "Folk's-book" in which the two legends were combined, "though in very loose connection," and this led him to a closer study of the original Tannhäuser-poem and the *Sängerkrieg*. What this "Folk's-book" may have been, we have now no possibility of deciding; in fact Dr. Golther believes it to have had no existence at all, and that Wagner's memory had deceived him; he adduces, moreover, the fact that in 1838 a certain G. T. L. Lucas published in the "*Transactions of the Royal German Society of Königsberg*" a thesis in which he attempted to prove the identity of Tannhäuser and Heinrich von Ofterdingen; and he appears to conclude that this brochure was the unsuspecting origin of the happy blending of the two legends by our author. This supposition certainly gains a certain amount of colour from the fact that Wagner was conductor at Königsberg in the year 1836, and probably kept up a correspondence with that town when he migrated to the not far distant Riga, where he stayed till the year 1839. But, on the other hand, Wagner's memory for details is proverbial, and the volume of his letters (to Uhlig etc.) recently published by Messrs H. Grevel & Co. affords us a case in point, where he writes to ask Uhlig to borrow him the "*Wölsunga-Saga*" from the Dresden Library, and gives the minutest description of a work which he could not possibly have seen for two whole years; these letters also contain numberless instances of his extraordinary faculty for retaining the smallest circumstance in mind. Wherefore, for our own part, we should lean to the belief that, somewhere or other, the "Folk's-book" to which he here refers had an actual and material existence.

As to the question whether Tannhäuser and Heinrich von Ofterdingen were really the same individual, as Wagner believed

when writing his drama, that seems to have been disposed of by German scholars in the negative. Yet if it is probable that the original Tannhäuser-legend dates from the second half of the thirteenth century and is to be held to have preserved its main features unaltered, it must have quickly spread in popularity, and there would be every probability of the author of the "*Sängerkrige*," at the end of that century, having borrowed from this legend the chief characteristics of his own "Heinrich"; for the two heroes have this in common, that each sings the praises of an Austrian monarch (at least the *historical* Tannhäuser does so), and each is leagued with the infernal powers. The disputed point is, however, of no great consequence; since, mistake or no mistake, Wagner has immensely enriched his subject by the fortunate combination.

One other source is still adduced by Dr. Golther, and that is the legend of St. Elisabeth of Thuringia. Though nothing is borrowed from her life, as told in the chronicles, yet the name alone must be considered a most happy inspiration of our poet, connecting as it does the heroine of the drama with one of the most beautiful traditions of the Roman Church.—

Having now disposed of its sources, we may turn for a moment to the personal impetus to the creation of the drama. The raw material fell into Wagner's hands, as we have seen, in Paris, shortly before he left that city for Dresden. In the "*Mittheilung*," written during his exile, he tells us "The '*Sängerkrieg*' is intimately connected, in the original, with a larger epic poem, '*Lohengrin*.' This I also studied; and thus with *one* blow a new world of poetic material was opened to me, a world of which I had before no notion. . . . At last, nine-and-twenty years old, I left Paris. My direct route to Dresden led through the Thuringian Valley, from which one can see the *Wartburg* towering above. How unspeakably homelike and inspiring was the effect upon me of this castle, to me already hallowed, but which—strangely enough!—I was not destined to actually visit until seven years later, when—already proscribed and pursued—I cast from it my last look upon that Germany which erst I entered with such warm affection, and now

must leave in contumely, an exile fleeing from his native land! . . . I reached Dresden (in 1842), to urge forward the promised production of my *Rienzi*. Before the actual commencement of the rehearsals, I made an excursion among the Bohemian mountains; there I composed the complete dramatic sketch of *Tannhäuser*. Before I could proceed to its development, however, I was doomed to be interrupted in a thousand ways."—

These interruptions were caused by Wagner's appointment to the post of Conductor at Dresden, and by the production not only of his own *Rienzi* and *Flying Dutchman*, but of works by other composers. For a time he even reverted to a former plan, that of completing a sketch that he had drawn up for another work, "*Die Sarazenin*," impelled thereto by the wish to create a striking rôle for the great singer, Sophie Schröder-Devrient. This was, however, finally abandoned; and he returned to his draught of *Tannhäuser* in 1843. As C. F. Glasenapp tells us, in an article likewise contributed to the above-cited *Kalender*, the poem was completed on May 22nd, of that year (Wagner's thirtieth birthday), and during a summer excursion to Teplitz the musical composition was begun, i.e. in July 1843. Interruptions again intervened, occasioned by flying visits to Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg etc. and the composer's mind was thus distracted from the mood so necessary to artistic creation; until the home-bringing of Weber's ashes at the end of 1844—a ceremony incited and completed by Wagner himself—re-awoke the craving to carry forward the great aim of his 'romantic' predecessor, to *Germanise* his native operatic stage. As with his *Walküre*, the nearer Wagner approached the close of his work, the greater was his feverish haste "lest a sudden death should rob it of completion;" and thus it was that the composition of *Tannhäuser* was ended on Dec. 29, 1844, and its instrumentation on the thirteenth day of the following April.

The work was first produced at Dresden, on October 19, 1845; and here we must turn from its history—too eventful to be given in abstract—to a consideration of the drama itself, a drama about which the author wrote in June of the same year to an intimate

friend : " Herewith I send you my *Tannhäuser*, as large as life, a German from head to foot. This work *must* be good, or else I *never* can turn out a good thing. It was a genuine spell, under which I worked ; wherever and however I touched my subject, it thrilled me with its warmth. May it but help me to win the hearts of my fellow-countrymen in wider compass than my earlier works have done ! "

So long as the story of Paul and Francesca, of Romeo and Juliet, of Faust and Gretchen, of Tristan and Isolde, shall have power to sway the hearts of men, so long must the story of *Tannhäuser* and Elisabeth maintain its place among the greatest tragedies of love. Seldom, indeed, has so overwhelming a tale of self-inflicted woe been told in such enthralling fashion ; and seldom has the healing efficacy of self-immolating love been expressed in loftier mood.

We must ask our readers, however, to divest themselves for a while of the impressions derived from an ordinary operatic performance of *Tannhäuser*, before we can expect their adhesion to our estimate of the subject-matter and its mode of treatment. For this work has always laboured under the disadvantages incident to the forerunner of a new style of art. In it Richard Wagner first struck out for himself the path that led to the *Ring des Nibelungen*, to *Tristan* and to *Parsifal* ; and it was only natural that the musical world should look on it as but another 'opera,' to be sung and *played with*—not *acted*—just as its predecessors had been. There was still sufficient of the external appearance of 'opera' about it, to blind people to the fact that in this work an entirely new departure had been made, and to encourage them to believe that they might deal with it in the same slipshod, half frivolous, half hysterical manner ; while the very fact of its rapid spread of popularity, almost throughout all Europe, when its author and composer was shut out by exile from any opportunity of giving the performances the right artistic tendency, has been sufficient to stamp upon it till

this day the early errors of managerial misconception. Both artists and art-connoisseurs had been too long accustomed to regard the text-book of an opera as unworthy of any further consideration than as to its fitness as a vehicle for the music. The idea of the dramatic framework itself being looked upon in the serious light of a poetic work of art, was far too novel and to them preposterous; in fact we still may come across many a fairly musically educated person who has never thought it worth his while to ask the question who wrote the *libretti* of Wagner's operas, and expresses the utmost astonishment when informed that both words and music proceeded from the same creative brain.

Yet the drama of *Tannhauser* is well worth investigating on its merits as a tragic poem; if only for the marvellous way in which its author has taken the old legend and developed therefrom a whole soul-history. As we have seen, the folk-song knew of but the beginning and the end of this drama, the sojourn with Venus and the papal ban, thus confining the consequences of Tannhäuser's action to the direct effect upon himself. By introducing the episode of the "Singing-tourney," Wagner has made possible also the introduction of the third great factor, the sacrificial love of Elisabeth. In this wise the knight of Venus is no longer made the mere puppet between two blind external forces, but becomes a breathing man; with his destiny set squarely down before him, to make or mar; with a world unrolled, on which to write his testament in living deeds. It is just this reflection of his erring past upon the placid surface of the present, that gives the picture of Tannhäuser and Elisabeth its tragic vividness; a picture whose lurid colours cannot fade until the soft dews of evening wash their stains away, and the star that greets Elisabeth's passing spirit, the chastened light of the heavenly Venus, beckons her lover's soul into the releasing future.

(To be continued.)

A Grecian Rhapsody.

TO M. SULLY PRUDHOMME.

PHASMAS are flitting, flitting through the grove,
 Night's myriads slow begin to wake and sing,
 The beetle, bat, and owl now deign to roam,
 And all prepare to glide on silent wing.

The firefly with his lamp begins to rove,
 Lighting his sombre way with gleam on gleam ;
 Leaves rustle, shadows dance, the silvery sheen
 Glows on each phosphorescent fern and flower
 And scented secrets rise from petalled bower
 To mingle in the melancholy dream.
 The drowsy frog, waked by refreshing dew,
 Joins in the cricket's tuneless song of love,
 While symphonies from distant waterfalls
 Mingle with murmurs from the spectral hosts,
 Slow gathering from old temples and lone tombs.
 Sad, silently serene, in mystic mood,
 The Lydian music wakes the languid throng,
 Led by the Nine in stately harmony ;
 Solemn and tender now the pensive sound
 Waft by Æola's breath through broken harps
 Hung in the fret-work of colossal towers,
 Plays with sad memories of buried hopes
 And treasures left beyond the Ægean Isles.
 Now with triumphant grace the pomp begins !
 With the famed lyre from classic Sappho's hands,
 And lute of Orpheus, magic-toned with love,
 That weaves a thread of rapturous melody
 Around the dreaming satyrs as the fauns
 Dance in fantastic frenzy, whilst the fires
 In fitful flashes on the altars gleam

Alternate with the glimmering of the moon
Through fleecy silver hovering in the air ;
A pompous peal rings through the sylvan vale !
A dazzling light ! a circle, then a glow !
A radiant form, nymph-like and innocent,
Yet witching as the Cynthian night when dreams
Of early love fill the young senses full,
Leaps forth from bower and thicket where glad streams
Flow from the fountains of Mount Helicon.
And now Terpsichore, followed by her train,
O'er fallen pillars flung on mouldering busts
In maddening beauty round and round is whirled,
Translucent through the wreaths of curling smoke
That rise from incensed ashes on the tombs ;
O'er tops of towering trees and lofty ruins
The phantom forms in lurid pallor soar ;
Then to the hollow base of rugged hills,
To fields where graves of ancient heroes lie,
Where sunlight never streams nor may-flower blooms ;
Around, above, beneath, in wood and sky,
Farewells and music fill the midnight air ;
Rarest of flowers, and rarer fragrance still,
Fall on each willing bosom like a breath
Borne by the languid balm of Cupid's wings ;
While pageants of Parnassian beauty pass
The fainting forms of lovers left behind,
Charmed by heroic tones from Triton's trump
And timbrel's magic sound.

Far, far away,
The immortal hosts ascending float along
Like comet's trail receding dim and dark,
Through nebulae and zones of mighty worlds
Beyond the meteor mists of distant stars ;
While ever and anon the giant's horn
Blows shivering blasts adown the yawning gulf,

Now smoking with the fumes of livid clouds
 Lashed into cyclones by the rushing wind
 Blown from the brazen wings the dragons bear.

Viewless as vanished dreams, when dawn dispels
 The soul's illusive hopes and promises
 That dwell betwixt the moonlight and the morn,
 The purple daylight gleamed ; and revelry
 Departed with the sunrise of new worlds
 That left the hallowed land of Grecian lore
 A wilderness of fading memories.

J. FRANCIS SHEPARD.

On the Performance of *Tannhäuser*.

(From the German of Richard Wagner ; continued from page 20.)



THE abridged version of the instrumental introduction to the Third Act, in the form in which it is contained in the scores that have been revised for the theatres, is the one which I now desire followed. In the first composition of this piece I allowed myself to be led by the subject I wished to describe to an almost recitative-like style of orchestral phrasing ; but, at the performance, I felt that the meaning might very well be intelligible to myself, who carried in my head the mental picture of the incidents thus portrayed, and yet be lost to others. However, I must insist upon an uncurtailed performance of this tone-piece in its present shape, since I deem it indispensable to the establishment of the mood demanded by the following scene.

For the same reasons as those above adduced, I found myself compelled, after the first representation, to effect an omission in Elisabeth's "*Prayer*," namely, that marked on pages 396 to 398.

That herewith the weightiest elucidation of the motive of Elisabeth's sacrifice and death went by the board, must be obvious to anyone who will take the trouble to carefully examine the poem or the music. Certainly, if the simple outlines of this composition, with its total denudation of all musical embroidery, are to avoid the effect of monotonous protraction, and to produce that of a staunchless flow of deep emotion, its delivery demands an intelligent devotion to the task such as we can seldom hope to meet with among our ordinary opera-singeresses. Here the mere technical perfection of even the most brilliant of voices will not suffice. By no art of absolute musical delivery can this Prayer be made 'interesting'; but only *that* actress can satisfy my intention who is able to feel out for herself Elisabeth's piteous situation, from the first quick budding of her attachment to Tannhäuser, through all the phases of its waxing growth, unto the final efflorescence of the death-perfumed flower—as it opens its last petal in this prayer—, and to feel this with the finest organs of a true woman's sensibility. But that it is only the highest dramatic, and especially the highest *vocal* art that can make it possible to bring this sensibility into effective outward operation—this is a thing that just *those* artistes will be the first to recognise who have erstwhile been most expert in cheating an emotionless heap of loungers of their ennui by means of their own blinding display of art, but must see the utter futility of their gymnastic feats when applied to such a task as the present.—The initial inexperience of my Dresden representative of this rôle must bear the whole blame, that I was forced to decide upon the omission here referred to. In the course of the subsequent performances I had ground to hope for a successful issue of the *whole* Prayer, should I restore it to its integrity; but another experience made me hold my hand, and this I consider I may here appropriately impart to the conductors and performers of my opera, in the form of the following admonition.—

Any characteristic feature of a dramatic work that we find expedient to omit from the first representations, can never be restored in subsequent performances. The first impression, even

when it is a faulty one, fixes itself, for public and performers alike, as a definite and given form, which any subsequent change—albeit a bettering—can only dislocate. More especially do the performers quickly accustom themselves, after surmounting the worries and excitement of the first production, to regard their achievements, such as they have set and moulded them during this incubatory process, as something inviolable and irrefutable; whilst carelessness and gradually advancing indifference at last contribute their share towards making impossible any fresh interference with a problem already considered solved. Therefore I entreat all future conductors and performers to come to a mutual understanding upon what I here bring to their notice, above all, *before* the first production. What they are or are not able to execute, must be definitely decided at the stage-rehearsals, even if not earlier; and, excepting from the sheerest necessity, one must not consent to omissions with the sorry consolation that the shortcoming may be remedied in later performances: for this it never comes to. In like manner one must not, in consequence of the inadequate success of this or that passage at the first production, at once feel prompted to lop away the offending member, but rather take more pains that the desired success shall not be lacking in the next performances. For where it is attempted to make an organically connected work more palatable by excisions, one only confesses one's own incapability; and the taste thus seemingly brought about, at last, is by no means a taste for the work such as it really is, but a mere self-deception; seeing that the work is now taken for something other than it actually is.

The genuine triumph of the representatrix of Elisabeth would then really consist in this: that she should not only evoke the complete effect of the whole Prayer, but that she should substantiate this effect by rendering possible a complete portrayal of the succeeding dumb-show through the enthralling power of her acting. I am well aware that this is a no less difficult task than the vocal delivery of the Prayer itself; and only where the actress feels

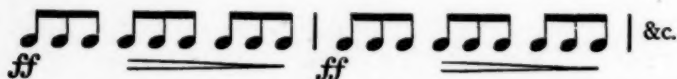
quite confident as to the effect she can produce by this solemn pantomimic display, will I therefore permit the complete reproduction of this scene.

Now as regards the *amended version of the opera's closing scene*, whose observance I most strenuously insist on, I have to beg those who—influenced by the impression made upon them by the earlier arrangement—do not approve of this change, to consider what I have said above concerning first performances and repetitions. The revised finale bears the same relation to its first manipulation as a developed scheme bears to a mere sketch, and I soon found out the absolute necessity of this development; whilst in the very fact that I set to work upon this elaboration, any one can see that I do not obstinately abide by my first draughts, and therefore that when I urge the resumption of passages previously omitted, it is not from any blindfold affection for my works. When I first composed this closing scene, I had just as complete a picture of it in my brain as I have since carried out in the second version thereof; not an iota of the intention is changed here, but merely, that intention is more perspicuously realised. The truth is, I built too much upon certain scenic effects which proved themselves inadequate in the execution. The mere fiery glow of the *Venusberg*, in the farthest background, was not enough to produce the disquieting and determinative impression that I intended; still less could the illumination of the windows of the *Wartburg* (also in the distant background), and the far-off strains of the Funeral Dirge, bring the finally decisive moment of Elisabeth's Death to the clear and physical perception of an audience unfamiliar with the literary and artistic aspect of the subject. My experiences here-anent were so convincing in their painfulness, that I found in the result of the non-understanding of this situation the most cogent reason for a revision of the closing scene; and this could be accomplished in no other way than by evoking the magic vision of Venus herself, in presence sensible to eye and ear,—whilst Elisabeth's death is no longer merely hinted at, but Tannhäuser falls dead upon her actual corpse. Although the effect

of this change was far and away more impressive as regards the unbiassed general public: yet I quite understand that, to the connoisseur who was already familiar with the earlier portrayal—and indeed had acquired the clue to the situation by making a closer acquaintance with the poem and music, outside the performance itself—this change was disconcerting. This I can the more readily comprehend, since it was only possible to present this new Finale in a very halting fashion at Dresden; for its execution had to depend upon the existing scenic material from the First Act, and was deprived of the aid of the fresh scenery which it required; moreover (as I have already mentioned) the acting of the rôle of *Venus* was one of the least satisfactory features in that production, and thus her re-appearance could in itself produce no favourable impression. But these grounds are quite untenable as against the currency of the new Close, when it is now a question of producing *Tannhäuser* for the first time upon other stages and with totally different antecedents, and therefore I cannot concede them the smallest consideration.

Deferring for a moment my discussion of this closing scene with the stage-manager, and especially the scene-painter, I have first to inform the musical director that I considered it necessary to omit from the second edition the final chorus of the 'younger pilgrims' that occurs in the first arrangement; for, after the preceding incidents, it is easy for this chorus to appear as nothing more nor less than a tedious spinning-out, if it be not brought by the richest expenditure of vocal means, on the one side, and by a striking scenic display on the other, to a grandeur of effect all its own. The chorus is exclusively confided to soprano and alto voices; these must be available in considerable number, and of great purity of tone; the approach of the singers must be so ingeniously contrived that, in spite of the fact that the whole choir only gradually assembles upon the stage, yet the hymn is intoned from the very first with the utmost possible fulness of sound; and finally the scene must be most effectively devised to reproduce the brilliant glow of the valley in the flush of dawn,—before the Director can

same theme in *forte*, this regulation of the breath of course cannot be observed; but, for sake of the necessary strength and prolongation of the sound, the wind-players must take breath as often as they need.—The *fortissimo* passage, from the third bar of page 5 to the second bar of page 10, should be executed by the accompanying instruments (i.e., the whole orchestra with the exception of the trombones, the tuba, and the drums) in such a manner that a full *fortissimo* marks the opening accent of each bar, whilst the second and third crotchets, however, are delivered with diminishing force. Thus:—



It is only the instruments above-named as directly concerned in the exposition of the theme, that must maintain an unvarying volume of sound.—At the sixth bar of page 22 the conductor should somewhat restrain the pace, which had a moment previously become almost too rapid, yet should do this without causing any striking retardation of the time; the expression of this passage should merely be sharply contrasted with the former section by a yearning—I might almost say, a panting—character, in both the method of delivery and the *tempo*. Upon page 23, bar 2, the accent is to be removed from the first note of the first violins; in the same way, in the first bar of page 24 the *fp* is to be changed to a simple *p*, for every instrument. On page 25 the time is to be again taken somewhat more crisply; only, the conductor must guard against the theme that enters with page 26 being played too fast: amid all the fire with which it is to be enunciated, by a too rapid *tempo* it would acquire a certain tinge of vulgarity, from which I desire it to be far removed.—

In the distribution of the violins into eight groups, from page 34 onwards, it must be seen to that the six lower parts be of equal strength, but the two upper, from page 35 on, be so filled up that the second part is stronger than the first; the first part might even be entrusted to one solitary leader, whereas the second part must

be numerically stronger than all the others.—The clarinettist generally mistakes the 'slur' in the first bar of page 35, and connects the first note of the triplet with the preceding $\frac{3}{4}$ crotchet; it must, on the contrary, be emphasised apart. On page 36 it must be particularly observed that the clarinet shall stand sharply out from amidst all the other instruments; even the first violin must not overshadow it, and the clarinettist must fully realise that from its first entry on this page down to the fifth bar of page 37, his instrument absolutely plays the leading rôle.—A moderately hasty acceleration of the time must take place at page 39, and not slacken down until the first five bars of page 41, when it passes over into the energetic *tempo* there required.—From the third bar of page 50 onwards, the conductor must maintain an unbroken volume of the fullest sound among all the instruments; any relaxation in the first eight bars of this section must be strenuously avoided.—

It is of the greatest moment for the understanding of the whole Close of the Overture, that from page 54 on, the violins be played in utmost *piano*, so that above their wave-like figure—almost given out in whispers—the theme of the wood-instruments may be heard with the greatest clearness; a theme which, despite the fact that it must not be played at all loud, must yet at once enchain the attention of the audience.—Beginning with the third bar on page 66, the conductor must accelerate the time—in regular progression, though with marked effect—in such a way that with the entry of the *fortissimo* on page 68 the needful pitch of rapidity is reached, in which alone the theme of the trombones, so greatly 'augmented' in its rhythm, can be given due and intelligible enunciation, in the sense that its notes shall not appear as detached and disconnected sounds.—In conclusion, I perhaps need scarcely impress upon the conductor and band that it is only by the utmost expenditure of energy and power, that the intended effect of this protracted *fortissimo* can be attained. The last four bars, after an additional acceleration of the six preceding them, are to be restrained in pace and delivered with a solemn breadth of measure.—

As to the "tempi" of the whole work in general, I can now only say that if the conductor and singers are to depend for their measure of time upon the metronomical notation alone, the spirit of the work performed must be left in sorry case; only *then* will they both discover the right measure, when the understanding of the dramatic and musical situations, won by a lively sympathy, shall without their further seeking disclose to them the proper measure as a thing self-evident.

For what concerns the *manning of the orchestra*,—seeing that the body of wind-instruments employed in this opera does not in any essential particular exceed the usual complement of all good German orchestras—I have only to draw attention to one point, and that of extreme importance in my eyes: I mean, the necessary effective strength of the *string-instruments*. German orchestras are invariably too scantily equipped with 'strings'; upon the reasons for this lack of fine perception of the true demands of good orchestral playing, one might say a good deal, and that pretty decisive as to the verdict to be passed on the condition of music in Germany, but that it would lead us too far afield. Thus much is certain, that the Frenchmen, however much we may cry down their frivolity, man their smallest orchestras far better with 'strings' than we ever find to be the case in Germany, even in our quite celebrated bands. Without any reserve I have therefore to say, that in the instrumentation of *Tannhäuser* I purposely kept in my mind's eye so large a muster of 'strings,' that I must insist upon every theatre, that undertakes this work, increasing its string-band beyond the usual complement; and my requirements herefor may be measured by this simple standard, that I declare that an orchestra which cannot muster at least four good violoncellists can only bring to hearing a mutilated version of my music.

I have made still more unusual demands for the musical equipment of the stage itself. If I stand by the exactest observance of my directions for the 'stage'-music, it is because I feel authorised

by the knowledge that in all the more important cities of Germany there exist large and efficient music-corps, especially those belonging to the military ; and from these the stage music-corps required by *Tannhäuser* can be readily combined. Further, I know that the opposition to the fulfilment of my requirements will chiefly come from the frugal sense of the theatrical Directors, justifiable as I admit it often is. But I must tell these Directors that they can expect no manner of success from the production of my *Tannhäuser*, excepting when the representation is prepared with the most scrupulous care in every respect ; in fact, with a care such as must necessarily give this representation, when contrasted with the customary productions, the character of a quite unusual occurrence. And as this character must be evinced by the whole production, under its every aspect, so must this be shown also under the aspect of its external 'mounting' ; for which I count upon no mere tinsel show or dazzling scenic legerdemain, but precisely upon the supplanting of these trumpery sensational effects by a really rich and deliberately artistic handling of both the whole and every detail.

I must now devote a few lines to the *Regisseur* (Stage-manager), in order to induce him to lay to heart what I have hitherto addressed chiefly to the Musical Director ; and to beg him to derive from its attentive perusal a measure for my claims upon the character of his own collaboration. In everything that concerns the representation, a musical success can only be secured when the most punctilious execution of every scenic detail renders possible the realisation of the dramatic whole. The stage-directions in the score—to which I drew his special attention in my opening sentence—will for the most part give him a clear idea of my intentions. My circumstantial intimations, occasioned by a reference to certain generally omitted passages, may show him what unusual weight I lay upon the definite motivation of the stage situations by the dramatic action ; and they may enlighten him as to the value I set upon his solicitous co-operation in the

arrangement of even the most trifling scenic incidents. I therefore entreat the Regisseur to throw to the winds that unhappily too customary regard for favoured opera-singers which leaves them almost exclusively in the hands of the Musical Director. Though, in the general undervaluing of Opera as a *genre*, people have thought fit to allow a singer to commit any absurdity in his conception of a situation, because forsooth "an opera-singer is no actor, and one only goes to the opera to hear the singing and not to see a play,"—yet I avow that if this indulgency pass current in the present instance, my work must be straightway given up as lost. What I ask of the performers will certainly not be evoked from them by mere verbal instructions; and the whole process of study which I desire, namely the holding of reading-rehearsals, aims at making the performers co-feeling, co-knowing, and finally, from their own convictions, co-working participators in the production. But it is just as certain that, under the ruling conditions, this result can only be brought about by the most active co-operation of the Regisseur.

Therefore I especially beg the stage-director to see to it that the scenic action shall synchronise in the most absolute manner with the accompanying orchestral passages. It has often happened to me that a piece of stage by-play—a gesture, a significant glance—has escaped the attention of the spectator because it came too early or too late, or at any rate did not precisely correspond in *tempo* or in duration with the correlated passage in the orchestra that appealed to the same *spectator* in his character of *listener*. Not only does this lack of attention on the part of the performer damage the effect of his own acting, but by this inconsequence, the said orchestral passages confuse the hearer to such a degree that he can only deem them arbitrary freaks of the composer. What a chain of misunderstanding is hereby given rise to, it is easy to perceive.

I further urge the Regisseur to guard against the 'processions' in *Tannhäuser* being carried out by the stage-company in the fashion of the customary 'march,' now stereotyped in all our opera performances. Marches, in the ordinary sense, are not to be found

in my later operas ; and therefore if the entry of the guests into the " Singers'-Hall " (Act II. Scene 4) be so effected that the choir and supernumeraries march upon the stage in double file, describe the favourite serpentine curve around it, and then take up their position athwart the wings in two military-drilled rows, awaiting the further operatic business,—then I merely beg that the band shall play for this manœuvre some march from "*Norma*" or "*Belisario*," but not my music. If, on the other hand, people should think it as well to retain my music, the entry of the guests must be arranged so as thoroughly to imitate actual life, and that in its noblest and most unfettered form. Away with that painful regularity of the traditional marching order ! The more varied and unconstrained are the groups of the oncomers, divided into separate knots of friends or relatives, the more attractive will be the effect of the whole 'entry.' Every knight and dame, on arriving, must be greeted with friendly dignity by the Landgrave and Elisabeth ; but naturally there must be no visible pretence of conversation,—a thing that, under any pretext, should be absolutely prohibited in a musical drama.—In this sense, then, a most important task will be the ordering of the whole course of the 'singing-tourney,' the easy grouping of the audience, and especially the betokening of their waxing and ever-changing interest in the main action. Here the stage-manager must draw upon the full resources of his art ; for only by his most ingenious tactics can this complex scene produce its due effect.

In the same fashion has he to conduct the approach of the Pilgrims in the First and Third Acts ; the freer is the play, and the more natural the division of their groups, the better will my purpose be fulfilled. As to the close of the First Act, where (in fact during this whole scene, though imperceptibly at first) the stage is gradually filled by an ever increasing hunting retinue, and as to the close of the Third Act, where I have been obliged to make the giving of the chorus of 'younger pilgrims' depend upon the skilful management of the stage,—I believe I have already said enough. But there is one most important matter upon which I

must finally advise the Regisseur : this is the execution of the first scene of the opera, the *Dance*—if so I may call it—in the *Venusberg*. I need scarcely point out that there is here no question of a dance such as we are accustomed to in operas and ballets ; the ballet-master whom one should ask to adapt a suchlike series of evolutions to this music, would soon send us to the right about, and declare the music to be quite unsuitable. But what I have in my mind is a scene that should embrace the essence of all that the highest choreographic and pantomimic art can accomplish : a wild, alluring, and fascinating chaos of softest delights, of yearning and longing, carried even to the pitch of the most delirious tumult of exulting riot. For sure, the problem is one not easy to solve, and the production of the desired 'chaotic' effect will undoubtedly tax the most careful and artistic ordering of the minutest details. The full course of this wild scene is distinctly laid down in the score, as far as concerns its essential features, and I must entreat those who undertake the setting of this scene, despite the freedom of invention which I concede them, to bear fixedly in mind the prescribed chief incidents. Repeated hearing of the music, as rehearsed by the orchestra, will be the best means of inspiring any one in the least expert in his business with the devices by which to arrange the stage-action in correspondence with the music.—

(This very scene now brings me into contact with the *Scene-painter*, whom I shall henceforth figure to myself as in the closest alliance with the Machinist. It is only by an accurate knowledge of the whole poetic subject, and after a deliberate understanding as to the scheme of performance with the Regisseur,—and the Kapellmeister, too—, that the scene-painter and machinist will succeed in dressing out the stage in the manner required. How often, on the contrary, when this agreement has been omitted, must it turn out that for sake of the at last inevitable employment of work ordered from the scene-painter and machinist under the influence of a one-sided acquaintance with the subject, the manager must finally adopt a violent distortion of his own intentions !

The chief details of the *Venusberg* scene, whose mechanical

construction must accurately fit in with the scene of the *Wartburg* valley already erected behind it (an arrangement favoured by the jutting mountain-spurs common to both), are sufficiently described in the score. However, the veiling of this scene behind rose-tinted clouds, and its consequent narrowing to a smaller space, is a somewhat difficult matter: for all the intended witchery would be quite destroyed, if this were accomplished by a downright and obtrusive pushing-forward and dropping-down of a massive canvas cloud-piece. After many careful trials, this 'veiling' was extremely effectively carried out at Dresden by the gradual lowering of a number of vaporous sheets of painted gauze, which were gradually let fall one behind the other; so that only when the contours of the previous scene had become quite unrecognisable, was a massive rose-coloured canvas 'back-cloth' let down behind these veils, thus completely closing in the scene. An accurate measuring out of the *tempo*, for the sake of perfect harmony with the music, was also observed.—The main change of scene should then take place with one stroke, in this wise: the stage is suddenly plunged in darkness, and first the massive cloud-cloth, and immediately thereafter the gauzy veils, are drawn swiftly up; whereon the light, breaking instantly forth once more, reveals the new scene,—the valley bathed in brightest sunshine. The effect of this valley-picture, which must be mounted in exact accordance with the directions in the score, should now be so overpoweringly fresh, inviting and serene, that the poet and musician may be allowed to leave the spectator for a moment to its contemplation.

The decorations for the Second Act, portraying the "Singers'-Hall" in the *Wartburg*, were so excellently executed by an eminent French artist for the Dresden production, that I can only counsel every theatre to procure a sketch and mount this scene in accordance therewith. The arrangement of the stage, as regards the placing of the rows of seats for the guests assembled to hear the Singers' tourney, was also so happily devised there that I have only to urge the putting in force of the instructions which may easily be obtained from Dresden.

The scenery of the Third Act did not fall out so successfully at Dresden ; for it was not till after the production of the opera that it became plain that a special scene should have been painted for this Act, whereas I had previously fancied that we could make shift with the employment of the second main decoration from the First Act. It proved, however, impossible to give to the same canvas, which had been calculated before for the brightest effect of midday springtime, the autumnal evening expression indispensable to the Third Act, notwithstanding the most ingenious contrivance of the lighting. But, above all, the magical illumination of the *Venusberg* could not be effectively rendered by this scenery, so that—as I have already said—I was obliged to content myself in the second version of this scene with somewhat inconsequently letting drop again the gauze 'veils' of the First Act, whereby the whole apparition of "Venus" was forced much too far into the foreground, and thus by no means produced the required effect of the beckoning of far-away temptation. I therefore engage the scenic artist, to whom the mounting of this opera is confided, to insist upon the painting of a special 'back-cloth' for the Third Act, and then to execute this in such a fashion that it shall reproduce the last scene of the First Act in the tones of autumn and evening, but with particular regard to the fact that, at the close, the valley is to be lit up by the glow of flushing dawn.—Then for the spectral apparition of the *Venusberg*—something like the following procedure might be adopted. At the passage noted in the score, and while the lighting is markedly diminished, there first sink down in the hinder half of the valley, two 'veils,' one after the other, so that the contours of the valley scenery in the background are rendered completely undistinguishable ; immediately afterwards the distant *Venusberg*, here painted as a transparency, must be illumined with a roseate glow. The inventive faculties of the scene-painter and machinist should now devise some means by which an effect may be produced as though the glowing *Venusberg* drew nearer and grew wide enough—its interior being now revealed—to embrace within it groups of dancing figures, whose mazy movements must

be clearly visible to the spectator. When the whole hinder stage is occupied by this vision, Venus herself will then appear in sight, reclining on a litter. Yet the perspective distance must still appear as great as the size of actual human figures will allow of the illusion. The vanishing of the apparition will then be brought about by the rapid diminution and final extinction of the rosy lighting of the background, which had up till then grown ever more vivid,—and therefore by the momentary entry of complete night, during which the whole apparatus necessitated by the apparition of the Venusberg is to be speedily removed. Next, while the dirge is being sounded, one will distinguish through the two still hanging veils the lights and torches of the funeral train, which descends from the heights in the background. Then the veils will be slowly drawn up, one after the other, and at the same time the gradually waxing grey of early morn will fill the scene, to finally give place—as said above—to the flush of dawn.

The scene-painter can now perceive how immeasurably important to me, nay indispensable, is his intelligent co-operation, and that I assign to him a certainly in no small degree decisive share in the success of the whole work ; a success only to be won from a clear and instantaneous understanding of the most unusual situations. Only his precise and genuinely artistic comprehension of my inmost purpose, however, can procure me this co-operation.

(To be concluded.)



To-day is the seventy-eighth anniversary of the birth of Richard Wilhelm Wagner—born May 22, 1813.

Liszt on Wagner.

I.



IN dealing with Liszt's brilliant, if occasionally somewhat bombastic writings on the subject of Wagner's earlier dramas, we must not forget the circumstances under which the task was undertaken by him. The position of the 'Wagner question'—as it is still called in some old-fashioned quarters—was very different in 1849, when the first of these essays was written, to what it is to-day. The composer had made a marked success at Dresden with an *opera*, *Rienzi*, and had followed up that initial fortune with the earliest in the evolutionary series of his '*music-dramas*.' But the *Flying Dutchman* had met with but a frigid reception, and *Tannhäuser* had required self-mutilation before it could gain the half-unwilling recognition of the Dresden quidnuncs. Disillusioned with the art-world from which he had awaited a warmer welcoming of earnest efforts, and implicated in the Dresden revolution,—wherein his share was dictated by nothing but the most innocent projects of art-reform,—the composer was now an exile from his country, with no friend of any weight to champion his person or his cause. It was then that Liszt arose, a tower of strength, and took upon himself the office of showing to the world what manner of art it was that had sent its first struggling rays above the horizon.

It would be difficult to over-estimate the self-forgetfulness of Liszt in this endeavour, impossible to over-rate the influence which he wielded for the Wagner propaganda. Here was a man whose talents as a pianist had won him world-wide fame, whose genius as a composer was gaining notoriety,—and yet he buried himself in the capital of a minor German court, almost with the sole intention of forwarding another's aims. And how he effected this! It is not too much to say, that but for Liszt the then almost unknown composer would never have become the central figure of the artists of our day, nor, without the Abbé's friendly words of comfort and

of help, would the giant chain of his later works have ever emerged from the depths of Wagner's thought.

There is another consideration which we must bear in mind : and that is the courtly life which Liszt had always led. It is widely reflected from these essays, especially those on *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, in each of which we find the opening chapter devoted to a catalogue of the princes and princesses who graced the first performances at Weimar, and a panegyric in their praise. The habits of the courtier could scarcely fail to peep out from beneath the guise of the scribe. Yet there may have been some worldly wisdom lying under this seemingly unnecessary introduction of the audience into a criticism of the spectacle.—The trick has not yet been lost, we fancy, by our newspaper reporters.—Liszt was championing an outlaw from a German court, whose works would certainly come before the other German magnates, if at all, under the cloud of royal disfavour ; it was therefore no far-reached diplomatic wile, to dangle before the eyes of distant potentates a list of names of princes who had deigned to hear the outlaw's strains ; while the satisfaction of being noticed in a serious art-brochure could scarcely prove distasteful to those who had attended the production.

Thus did Liszt employ his every strategy to gain for Wagner a more reasonable hearing. Let us now see what he says about the works. We cannot do more than glance at each, and shall therefore select for our present instalment his review of the *Tannhäuser* Overture. For sake of brevity, we must restrain ourselves to fragments of this wonderful word-painting ; but we think that our readers will agree with us that very little that has ever been written on Wagner will call up so lively a picture of the very sounds of his music as the following description :—

" This great overture forms so complete a symphonic whole, that one may regard it as a musical entity independent of the opera which it precedes. Of the two chief ideas that are here developed, before their union in one gigantic stream of confluence, each proclaims its entire range of meaning ; the one with fury, the other with an ascendant so irresistible that it ends by occupying the whole field of sound with its invincible dominion. . . . They paint so lively a picture of

the feelings they interpret, that to understand their nature there is no want of an explanatory programme, no need to know the words which are wedded to them later. . . .

The *Religious motif* first appears, calm, profound, in slow pulsation, like the essence of the grandest and the noblest of our instincts; but it is gradually submerged by the insinuating modulations of the voices of the *Syrens*, full of enervating languors, of numbing joys, however feverish and agitated:—a troubling medley of allurements and disquiet! Rhythmic and harmonic figures distributed among the violas, the violins in highest register, and the 'wind' in softest pianissimo; accentuated by light cymbal-clashes; cut into syncopated periods and spirally-ascending groups of notes, which lose and recover each other in inextricable enlacement; thrown into sharp relief upon an almost continuous tissue of tremolos and trills, in frequent change of rapid modulation;—these show us the fascinations of the *Syrens* by means of an effect so new, so searching in its languorous sonority, that the rich repertory of existing music of this *genre* offers nothing so daring in its imagery, so striking in its mirroring of the temptations of the senses, of their bewildering attractions and prismatic glitter. Notes glide by us that hiss within the ear like certain glances that tantalise the eye:—long, penetrating, disarming—traitorous! Under the velvet of their artful softness one spies despotic intonations, one feels the vibrant throb of rage.

Here and there, grace-notes spurt from the violin-bow like phosphorescent sparks. Each twirl of the cymbals sets every nerve a-quivering, as though it were the distant echo of some orgy turned to riot. There are chords of frenzied drunkenness here, which remind us that the Cleopatras of old deemed not their feasts disfigured by brutality; that they shrank not from mingling the stimulus of sanguinary spectacles with that of love; that they knew how to associate barbaric pleasures with their surfeit of beauty. . . .

A genius German-born needed a share of Shakespeare's universal intuition, to thus saturate himself with the blood of antiquity—so to speak—and seize an inspiration so foreign in its feverishness to the sadder leaven of the North. The passions of the flesh are represented here by joys too vehement and delights too keen, for cold, obtuse, and heavy natures even to imagine; but which are dreamt of, sought for, and pursued by energetic natures that long for more than everyday sensations. Such organisations, high-strung and delicate at once, throw to the winds of every hazard their overflowing exuberance of life, and pour out the torrent of their passion without a let or hindrance; so long as they have not yet found the channel wide and deep enough to contain their rushing, surging, and insatiable waves. Yet one may justly admire, in this creation of Wagner's, how the vigour of the touch never crushes out its softness; for it was no easy task to give due play to both these characteristics, and yet their union alone could properly portray those fiercely languorous transports whose secret some men fain would snatch from desire without affection.

In the heart of this harmony, which gluts us with its myriad sounds—light, loose-cast, spun-out, unseizable and glowing like the airy meshes of forbidden joys; in the heart of this harmony, that flows over in a deluge of sparkles, ever more blinding in their scintillation,—a burst of dramatic interest awakes us with a sudden shock:

when the strain of sentiment, however vague before, now individualises itself in two melodic phrases (those of *Tannhäuser* and of *Venus*), whereof the one rings out as a cry of triumph mingled with defiance, while the other lulls us like the articulate appeal of a temptress' voice, as she quits her mute embraces.

To span majestically a gulf so glittering with pleasure's richest colours, the musician required to scale a hitherto unwonted height.—The Religious Theme, once already overwhelmed by this whirl of notes that kiss the ear like breaths of fire, that make the finger-tips to tingle, that stir the nerves, and tantalise the brain like fairy promises and enchantments past the fathoming: that theme, now called upon to rise in presence of this delirium of illusions and swoon of the senses, ran risk of seeming cold and gloomy, stiff and arid, as empty as a negation in face of gladsome affirmation; of proving but a worn-out expedient, a commonplace antithesis, a contrast brusque but not conclusive. But so it is not! . . . The sacred motif reappears in soft and dulcet tones, to conquer piecemeal every chord whose seductive strains have exercised so great a charm. It grasps them one by one, though they dispute its dominance with desperate resistance. Calm and serene, it extends its sway despite of all defiance, transforming and assimilating these hostile elements. The mass of burning tones now crumbles into ruins, forming discords ever more distressful, until they grow as repellent as decomposing perfumes.

At last we gladly see them all resolve into the stately grandeur of the Canticle, that floods with its pomp and brilliance all the splendour of the dazzling show that had preceded it. In measure with its march, it spreads around a sheet of liquid sunshine, a current vast and deep, bearing with it our whole soul, our whole being, into one sea of Glory!"

With the above extract which we may safely leave to speak for itself, we must content ourselves until our next issue.—

NOTES.

Half a loaf is said to be better than no bread; therefore must we be thankful that the Covent Garden performances of *Tannhäuser* have given us the opportunity of hearing M. Maurel in the rôle of "Wolfram," and of renewing our acquaintance with Mdme. Albani's inimitable "Elisabeth." But the other half-loaf is wanting entirely, if we except a fragmentary crust in the matter of Sig. (or is it Herr?) Abramoff's "Landgrave." It is really disheartening, to

think that half a century after the writing of this dramatic opera we cannot get it reverently performed or staged. No wonder a daily paper talks of the "much spun-out and, dramatically speaking, uneventful second act," when the dramatic music assigned to the tenor in the great Adagio, is entirely omitted, and when that gentleman allows himself to be crushed into nothingness by the sheer weight of metal of the other singers. *Tannhäuser* has not yet been

heard in England ; and it never will be, until managers begin to realise that it is not a *pantomime* but a drama.

Who, for instance, can patiently tolerate a "Venus" attired in the ball-room costume of the nineteenth century, and thereby impressing on the opening scene a character of 'modern'-ness which robs it of all sublimity, even if it do no worse?—High heels do not a goddess make!—But no, we must be mistaken ; the present production is praised as being "mounted sumptuously." Perhaps the furnace glow that illumines Elisabeth, and leaves the rest of the last scene in darkness, is witness thereof ! Or is it the ingenious device by which the cloud-veil is done away with in the First Act, allowing us to see poor Venus dragged off on her couch, while the grotto cleaves asunder, half to walk off to the left, and half to the right, while staggering columns of stalactite are heaved aloft ? If not that, is it the horses with their modern saddles, making the rest of the characters appear a belated band of travellers arrived too late for Mr. —'s Fancy Ball ? Well then ; perhaps the goats that relieve "Tannhäuser" of the necessity of remaining *en évidence* during the crucial moment of his miraculous return to Earth, and listen, in place of him, to the goat-herd's joyous May-song ! No ?—Then mayhap the crowd of peasants that flock on before the Landgrave's party, and occupy the centre of the stage, listening to what their betters have to say ; in such a way that when Tannhäuser bursts away, in act to press toward Rome, he comes plump upon the listening crowd, and one wonders whether he is going the round with the collecting hat, or is bent on counting the tines of the too 'previous' stag ;—though in justice to the management we must allow that this crowning folly has now been eliminated. —But what can we say to a *regisseur* who can not only permit such things, but can bring back the whole opening

scene to the front of the stage in the Third Act, thus doing away with all sense of "far-away temptation" ? Let us draw a veil over the *Tannhäuser* of the Spring of 1891, and shudder when we think what may befall the contemplated *Siegfried* !

* * * *

Turning to a more pleasant subject, we have to announce the fact that already over 2,000 seats have been booked in London, through Messrs. Chappell & Co., for the forthcoming Bayreuth *Festspiel* ; and we can only counsel our readers to apply early if they wish to secure good, or perchance *any*, places for a series of performances where Wagner's dramas are given as they should be. So far as is at present known, the singers who will take part in the *Festspiel* are Mesdames Sucher, Malten, Staudigl, Wiborg, and de Anna (where is Frau Materna ?), and Herren van Dyck, Gudehus, Alvary, Grüning, Betz, Reichmann, Scheidemantel, Wiegand, Grengg, and Mödlinger (where is Heinrich Vogl ?).

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We need scarcely remind our readers that the series of Richter Concerts commences on May 25, and terminates on July 20. The concerts need no recommendation of ours to all who appreciate the perfection of orchestral playing, and care to hear their 'Wagner' undisfigured.

We do need to remind them, however, that Herr C. F. Glasenapp's *Wagner-Encyclopædie* (in German) is now ready (Messrs. Fritzsch, Leipzig), and that it forms an invaluable guide to the study of the Master's prose. By kind permission of the author, we hope from time to time, in later issues, to give a few translations from the separate groups of excerpts. We have also to announce a short thematic analysis of *Tannhäuser*, particulars of which will be found on page 2 of our cover.

